

Woodbridge Neighborhood Historic District

General boundaries: Gibson, Calumet, Brainard and Trumbull.

Local

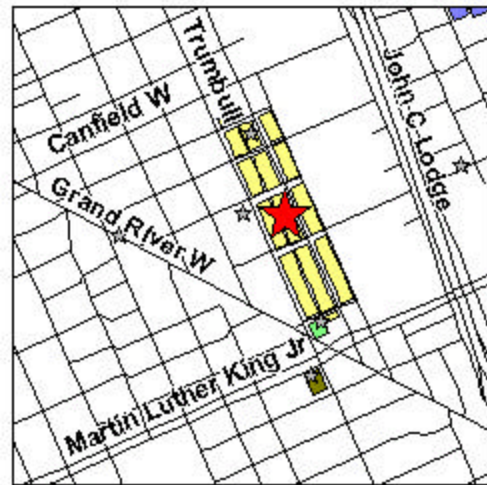
State

State Marker

National v 3/6/80



5200 Block of Commonwealth



Historic overview:

Woodbridge is important not only for the architectural excellence of buildings, but as a historical benchmark to the growth of Detroit. The importance of the neighborhood is underscored by the fact that ambitious redevelopment projects in recent decades have eradicated so much of Detroit's historic residential fabric, that Woodbridge stand out as a rare survivor of its period in this part of the city.

The neighborhood takes its name from William Woodbridge, territorial governor of Michigan in the 1800s, who owned the largest farm in the area. The area was slowly built up with modest cottages, most of which were constructed after 1870. James Scripps set the tone on Trumbull with his spacious home built in 1879. Therefore the Eighth Precinct Police Station (1901) was lavishly designed to blend with the upper-class residences. Change occurred in Woodbridge in the early 1900s, with new buildings and apartment construction behind and between houses, due to the auto industry's demand for housing. Also, during WWII, a patriotic campaign encouraged owners in Woodbridge to rent rooms or create apartments to house defense industry workers. Thus, population density increased dramatically. After the war, a boom in suburban construction made new homes on the fringes of the city inexpensive, and some residents left Woodbridge. They were replaced by less affluent citizens.

The deterioration of Woodbridge accelerated in the 1960s as adjacent areas became blighted and were marked for clearance by Urban Renewal authorities. The residents organized a Citizen's District Council and succeeded in preserving the neighborhood. As a result of extensive publicity, perseverance and a professional staff, Woodbridge has managed to change its image to an integrated up-and-coming area.

